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“Everyone knows grandma.” Pathways to community gambling venues for families living in regional Australia.

***“Everyone knows grandma.”* Pathways to community gambling venues for families living in regional Australia.**

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Abstract

Background: In Australia, community gambling venues provide a range of non-gambling family activities including cheap children's meals. They also provide community funding for activities such as junior sport through revenue generated from electronic gambling machines (EGMs). Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital, this paper aimed to explore the factors that influence parents' decisions to attend community gambling venues with their children.

Method: Face-to-face qualitative interviews were conducted with 31 parents who attended community gambling venues with their children, in New South Wales, Australia.

Results: Families attended venues for three key reasons, first because of the influence of others in their social networks, second for regular social activities, and third because of structural factors such as a lack of alternative, affordable, family friendly environments in their local area. Despite recognising the harm associated with EGMs, parents distanced themselves from EGM harm with all parents perceiving venues to be an appropriate space for families. Many parents told researchers they had not had detailed conversations with their children about the gambling products within the venue or their potential harm.

Conclusions: Research in this study indicates that family social practices within venues affect perceptions of risk associated with community gambling venues. The impact of these practices on longer term health requires more investigation by public health researchers and practitioners. Local organisers should consider identifying alternative sources of support and/or developing alternative social spaces for families in regional communities that do not contain gambling products.

Introduction

Australia has been described as a “*gambling hotbed*” (The Economist, 2017). In 2015/16, Australia’s total gambling expenditure was \$23.6 billion, with approximately half (\$12.1 billion) coming from one gambling product: electronic gambling machines (EGMs) (Queensland Government Statistician's Office & Queensland Treasury, 2017). Also known as pokies, poker machines or slots, EGMs are associated with a range of health and social harms, including family violence, relationship breakdowns, homelessness, and financial hardship (Bellringer et al., 2016; Dickson-Swift, James, & Kippen, 2005; Holdsworth, Tiyce, & Hing, 2012; Patford, 2009). Despite the legalisation and availability of EGMs in communities in all states and territories in Australia (except Western Australia, in its single casino), over half of EGM losses occur on the 94,408 EGMs within community gambling venues (clubs or hotels) in the Australian state of New South Wales (Queensland Government Statistician's Office & Queensland Treasury, 2017).

Survey data reveals important information about the types of people who may be particularly vulnerable to the harms associated with EGMs. For example, the most recent Australian data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey found that just over one fifth of Australians gambled on EGMs regularly (at least once per month), that regular participation in EGMs was higher for individuals who were experiencing problems with gambling, and that individuals from lower socio-economic groups spent more on these forms of gambling than those from higher socio-economic groups (Armstrong & Carroll, 2017). The study also found that EGM gambling may be linked to socio-geographic factors, with EGM gamblers over-represented amongst those who live in inner regional areas (Armstrong & Carroll, 2017). However, there has been limited research to explore the range of factors that may contribute to this overrepresentation of EGM gambling in specific regions, including information about the social practices and pathways to EGM gambling in these communities.

Community gambling venues provide “*more than just gaming opportunities*” (Thomas, Sullivan, & Allen, 2009, p. 101), with research indicating venues are often viewed as safe and comfortable environments for people who may otherwise be marginalised within communities (Fabiansson, 2016; Thomas & Lewis, 2012). They are also important sources of social activity for people in areas which lack alternative affordable entertainment options in

different areas; however these factors may also contribute to increased or excessive gambling (Thomas et al., 2009). Community gambling venues are embedded into the socio-cultural fabric of rural and regional communities (McDonald et al., 2014), and provide a focal point for celebrations and social occasions (Greenslade, 2013). Venues also fund local community activities and infrastructure, including junior sport and sporting areas, and the provision of comfortable social facilities such as restaurants (Greenslade, 2013). These activities may act to increase acceptance of gambling activities also available within these venues, in the absence of alternative environments. Fabiansson (2008) explains that in rural and regional communities “*gambling pursuits were an integrated part of the social entertainment*” within gambling venues, and introduced children to gambling from a young age “*in a protective and family friendly environment*” (Fabiansson, 2008, p. 165). This raises a number of questions about how social practices may normalise gambling for children from a young age and whether or not this plays a role in shaping their perceptions of gambling harm and future gambling behaviours. With pathway models of gambling drawing largely upon the individual determinants of problem gambling (Hancock & Smith, 2017), there is much less information about the range of key determinants (socio-cultural, environmental, commercial, and policy) that may shape and normalise the social practices associated with gambling venues (Thomas et al., 2018).

Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus* and *cultural capital* explain people’s actions in the context of their social location, social structures, and social class (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986). These concepts provide a useful framework for understanding social practices associated with community gambling venues. Bourdieu (1986) theorised that processes of socialisation, which occur through socio-cultural, economic, and institutional power structures, shape shared tastes, habits and dispositions. Habitus is largely a product of our upbringing and class, and is developed as a result of early childhood experiences (Brierley-Jones et al., 2014). Bourdieu (1986) argues that individuals demonstrate their relationships to the dominant culture through a range of social activities, such as eating and drinking, which are embodied and enacted in everyday life. Another key aspect of this theory describes the *fields of practice*, that are built partly through our economic, cultural, and social experiences, and create a range of historical principles which an individual draws upon with limited conscious thought or questioning (Bourdieu, 1986, 1990). For example, if young people have grown up with community gambling venues being central to social activities, there is limited reason for them to think about the potential harms associated with these venues (Bestman, Thomas,

Randle, & Pitt, 2017). While these principles are flexible and may adapt or change according to an individual's social experiences, and the volume of cultural capital that is built over time (Bourdieu, 1986), they also create a range of restrictions and expectations, according to which individuals are expected to behave in much the same way as other similar individuals. These expectations are often reinforced by power structures, although they need not be, as they are maintained by everyday practices that are often taken for granted. As Reay (2004) explains, this creates a tension specifically related to the choices individuals make:

"Choice is at the heart of habitus.... but at the same time the choices inscribed in the habitus are limited. I envisage habitus as a deep, interior, epicentre containing many matrices. These matrices demarcate the extent of choices available to any one individual. Choices are bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints the person finds himself/herself in, her external circumstances." (Reay, 2004, p. 435).

The concept of (bound) choice is important in understanding pathways to community gambling venues, particularly as there are few alternative choices for individuals within regional communities. These choices are compounded if dominant social agencies within these communities, such as sporting clubs, actively use and promote venues as positive and valued social spaces. Importantly, *habitus* and *cultural capital* may also reinforce risk behaviours and become part of everyday life (Dixon & Banwell, 2009). This is important in understanding how individuals conceptualise the risks associated with community gambling venues, particularly given dominant narratives associated with gambling as a 'choice' which is largely linked with personal responsibility (Miller & Thomas, 2017). Understanding perceptions of risk is important given that community gambling venues provide a range of gambling activities that co-exist with other activities specifically designed to appeal to families, including playgrounds, children's entertainment, school holiday activities, family days and children's meal deals. Often, these activities are not accessible elsewhere in the community (Bestman et al., 2016), therefore individuals may not have the cultural or financial resources to act upon information relating to the risks associated with harmful products (Dixon & Banwell, 2009).

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, cultural capital, fields of practice, and risk, this paper aimed to explore the factors that influence parents' decisions to attend community

gambling venues with their children in a regional area of New South Wales, Australia. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the social practices of families who attend community gambling venues?
2. What are the range of factors that may shape attitudes towards and use of these venues?
3. How do parents conceptualise the risks and benefits of community gambling venues?

Methods

This paper was part of a broader study that used qualitative methods to explore the experiences of 27 families (parents and children aged 6-16 years) who attended community gambling venues in the Illawarra region of New South Wales, Australia. This area includes the two local government areas of Wollongong, and Shellharbour, with 44 clubs containing 3,291 EGMs, as of 4 December 2017, and net EGM profits of over \$163 million between December 2016 and November 2017 (Liquor and Gaming New South Wales, 2018). While the study interviewed both parents and children, this paper reports only data relating to parents. Ethics approval was received from the [blinded] University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Sampling and recruitment

Inclusion criteria included families with at least one child under 18 years old who attended a community gambling venue in the previous 12 months and were currently living in the Illawarra region. Family groups were recruited initially through convenience sampling and through personal networks, local businesses, and Facebook pages for local community groups. Snowball sampling was also used, which involved participating families passing on details of the study team to other families they thought might also be interesting in participating. Finally, theoretical sampling techniques (Charmaz, 1990) were also used to ensure that a diverse range of families with different attitudes towards, and engagement with, community gambling venues were included. For example, we were interested in parents who gambled when at the venue, as well as those who went to the venue for non-gambling activities only. Given Bourdieu's emphasis on class, we also tried to identify families from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds by recruiting participants from different local suburbs with varying socio-economic profiles. To be included in the study families must have

attended a local community gambling venue containing EGMs in the previous 12 months in the Illawarra region, but did not need to have gambled on EGMs at these venues. Parents were provided with a plain language statement that explained the study, and they provided written consent to participate in the project. Each family was given a \$30 grocery voucher as thanks for their participation.

Data collection

Face-to-face qualitative interviews were conducted with families between April and October 2016. For three families, two parents were involved in the research. Each interview took between 45-80 minutes, was digitally recorded with consent, and transcribed. For the purposes of describing the sample, demographic data were collected including age, gender, postcode, frequency of attendance at venues and gambling participation. The interview schedule was designed to qualitatively explore family experiences with community venues in regional communities. First, we examined how families built social capital within community gambling venues. This included examining the range of activities and facilities used within venues, reasons families attended venues and barriers to attending alternative venues instead. Second, we examined factors that facilitated the use of community gambling venues as settings for social rituals. Finally, we examined how parents conceptualised gambling harm within family settings to determine how families interpret the 'rules of the game'. This included asking parents whether they thought their children were exposed to gambling products within community venues, whether their children had talked about gambling products within the venue and whether they were concerned about their children's exposure to gambling products while in the venue. Data collection continued until no new themes emerged from the data.

Data analysis

Demographic data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Postcodes were used to calculate Socio-Economic Indicators for Areas (SEIFA) status through the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage for each family (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a, 2013b). SEIFA scores (ranked from 1-10) were grouped into low (1-3), middle (4-7) and high (8-10). The qualitative methods used in this study were guided by a constructionist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1990) to develop a deep understanding of the experiences of

parents who attended community gambling venues. Codes and categories were developed based on parents social experiences within venues and the meaning ascribed to them. We then compared these across parents to identify common themes. The research team met regularly to discuss the emerging themes and how they fit with the broader concept of habitus. These concepts were further refined during writing, until key themes and theoretical constructs were constructed from the data (Charmaz, 1990).

Results

Sample description

A total of 31 parents were included in the study from 27 family groups. The majority of parents were mothers (n=26, 83.9%), with only five fathers included (16.1%). Parents were aged between 30 and 54 years, with a mean age of 42.38 years (SD 6.6). The majority of parents reported not using EGMs in the past year (n=19, 61.3%), with 12 parents (38.7%) stating they had used EGMs within a venue in the previous 12 months. One fifth of families lived in low socioeconomic areas (n=6, 22.2%), the majority of families lived in middle socioeconomic areas (n=19, 70.4%) and two families lived in high socioeconomic areas (7.4%). Just under half of families reported attending venues that contained EGMs at least once a month (n=11, 40.7%), with four families attending at least weekly (14.8%). Seven families attended venues once every two or three months (25.9%), and nine families attended less than three times per year (33.3%).

Habitus: Factors influencing the social practices associated with community gambling venues.

There were a number of factors that influenced the social practices within venues and the choices that parents made about attending community gambling venues. Some of these choices were personal, some were the result of structural factors that limited parents' ability to seek alternatives for their families, and some were choices made by others.

Some families attended venues because of the influence of others in their **social networks**. These participants were invited to attend the venue by others. For example, one mother said, *“my friends quite often ask us to go there, but you know, I’m not interested in [the venue] at*

all” later saying while at the venue *“we made excuses and left early”*. For some of these families, attendance at venues was aligned with wider practices of sport participation and the use of clubs by sporting groups. This included when *“all the teams go over [to the venue after sport], all the families go over and have a meal”*. It is important to note that many of these junior sporting teams were sponsored by the venue and incentives for attending venues, such as restaurant vouchers were given to children as a reward for playing well. Second were families who attended venues regularly for **social activities**. While for many in this group initial attendance at venues was the result of being encouraged to attend by others in their social group, this group made active choices to attend the venue. For example, one mother said that she initially started attending the venue when her son *“joined up for footy”*, but now goes to the venue once every three months with her family for dinner and special occasions such as birthday because *“I just think the food is better, the staff, it’s convenient and the price”* compared to going to other venues.

For many of these families, continued attendance had become part of regular social rituals, predominantly due to a preference for the range of activities that were provided by the venue. These parents reported attending venues for a range of social activities with their children. Families who attended more frequently (for example weekly), were often encouraged to attend by promotions within the venue, and in particular meal promotions. For example, one family reported going to the venue every Thursday because it was *“\$6 burger night”*, while others (who attended different venues) described attending weekly on *“family night”* with meal deal options and children’s entertainment. Families who attended venues less frequently were more likely to describe attending for special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas functions or sporting presentation nights. One mother described attending venues for *“celebrations”* such as Mother’s Day or for her 40th birthday. For others, the venue provided an experience of luxury that they were otherwise unable to afford. For example, one mother said:

“It’s beautiful. They’ve spent a lot of money on it all. Re-doing all the club and yeah, it looks lovely.” (Participant 27)

Despite the different range of reasons given for attending community gambling venues, parents often described that their initial visits were linked to **structural factors** within the regional community in which they lived. These included a lack of alternative, affordable,

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family friendly environments in their local area, for recreation, and/or meals. Attendance was reinforced through the provision of high quality family specific facilities (such as playgrounds and children’s areas), which in turn shaped individual preferences towards these venues. For some parents, taking children to clubs was part of a tradition:

“Probably the cost of the meals are cheaper so it’s subsidised in that way. It’s just something that we’ve always felt comfortable having kids in a club environment. It seems to be more accepting of kids as opposed to sometimes nice restaurants that aren’t, necessarily.” Father, 48 years old, attends venue once a fortnight.

The creation of cultural capital: The club as a place of inclusion and belonging

While not all families attended them regularly, it is noteworthy that *all* parents perceived the venues to be an appropriate space for families, with several parents describing the venue as *“family orientated”*. Parents referred to venues as environments that many families with children visited, often justifying the choice to take children to these venues on this basis. For example, one mother stated that *“we’re definitely not the only family... there’s always been big groups of people”*, and another said, *“there’s a lot of families there so there’s a lot of children”*. Parents also described that the venue was an easy and convenient place to take a family to dinner because it was friendly and inclusive for children - *“it’s a super easy place to eat because its kid friendly”*. Some parents also described the structural characteristics of venues that they felt made gambling venues appropriate spaces for families to attend. For example, some parents said that venue renovations and the provision of children activities (such as playgrounds and children rooms) helped to transform gambling venues into spaces where parents felt comfortable spending time with their children:

“I feel that society would have looked upon you like you were a bad parent [for taking children to some gambling venues]...But now the [venue] has got so open, I find it’s great because I’m 30 and my friends are 30 and we all have children. We can all do that, go out for pub lunch or go out and have dinner and have a few drinks and still be able to take the kids. So for me, that’s what I like about it.” Mother, 30 years old, attends venue once a month.

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Parents also commented about the role of the venue in the community. For example, some talked about the inclusive, welcoming nature of the venue, that it was *“pretty safe”*, and played a role in creating a sense of community for their local area. For example, one mother commented that events held by the venue *“bring a sense of community”*.

Fields of practice: reinforcing intergenerational attendance

For some participants there were clear intergenerational pathways for visiting the venue. For example, one mother recounted that *“we weren’t allowed in there [the venue] as young kids, but dad worked there so we went to all their Christmas parties”*. She then described attending the venue as a young adult, now attending every week with her children, meeting up with her siblings and mother. She described enjoying the familiarity with the venue and that *“everyone knows grandma so we’ve always got people coming up and talking to us”*. Another mother who attended the club every week with her family for ‘raffle night’ and to meet up with extended family, said:

“I’ve got heaps of memories there... like we had dad’s wake there from his funeral and stuff like that. So there’s nothing I don’t like there.” Mother, 48 years old, attends venue once a week.

While the specific activities used by parents changed over the course of their lifetime, their current need for family specific activities and their familiarity with the venue contributed to their continued attendance. For example, some parents described attending venues as young adults due to the accessibility and affordability of alcohol, but now attended for the family friendly activities. One mother, who did not attend venues regularly, reflected that she grew up attending venues with her family and would probably continue to go, if she had not moved to an area with limited venues containing EGMs:

“I think moving out of the area. Like if I still lived in [suburb], I’d probably go...more often than I go now. Because it’s there and a lot of people I grew up with probably still go down there.” Mother, 32 years old, attends venue less than four times per year.

Perceptions of the risk associated with community gambling venues

When prompted, all parents acknowledged that EGMs could be harmful for those who used them. Some parents who played EGMs within venues indicated they would not use them while they were in the venue with their children. For example one mother described using EGMs if she was at the venue for lunch with a friend but would not use them if she was having dinner with her family.

“We’ll go there for dinner, if its family. Which then I don’t play the poker machines because we’re there as family we go for dinner and then we leave. If, as I said during the day I go with a friend... for lunch or something like that and then I would go [use EGMs]”. Mother, 53 years old, attends venue four or more times per year.

A small number of parents spoke about family members who used EGMs, including when they were visiting venues with their family. However, many perceived that while children were aware of gambling within the venue, they did not consider that they had been exposed to gambling products:

“I guess it’s not something that I think they’re exposed to.Most of the clubs we go to, they are sectioned off as such. But yeah they know Nan and Pop play the pokies and stuff like that. It’s obviously, it’s not the time that we’re there. If we’re there we’re all sitting down having dinner. (Nan and Pop) don’t then go over to the poker machines or that area, or anything like that until we’ve gone home. When we go, they get up and go do whatever they want to do. They know Nana plays the pokies ‘cos Nana wins quite a bit and she’s quite happy to tell everybody!” Mother, 42 years old, attends venue once per week.

All parents acknowledged the presence of EGMs in their descriptions of the venues. Despite recognising the harm associated with EGMs, parents used various techniques to distance themselves from EGM harm. In particular, many parents who did not gamble while they were at the venue considered that their children were not therefore, being put at risk:

“I guess if you went like even weekly or twice a week and spent a couple of hours there and say if we went as a family and dad went and played the pokies for 15 or 20 minutes while I sat in the park with the kids then I guess that would be different. But we don’t do that. So I guess they don’t see that side of it really. It’s just like it’s there

but they don’t really know I mean you can see the TAB, you can see the betting area, but the pokies are actually behind a closed door.” Mother, 37 years old, attends venue once a fortnight.

Some parents acknowledged that the provision of family products within venues that also contain gambling activities could play a role in normalising gambling for families. However, despite this recognition narratives from parents suggested that they perceived the benefits of attending the venue (such as cheap meals and social activities with the family) outweighed any potential harms. This view was particularly strong among parents who did not use the gambling products in venues, and who perceived that money from EGMs ultimately was returned for the benefit of those who used the venue. Describing the money that clubs made from gambling venues, one mother stated:

“They’re not just keeping it for themselves, they’re actually giving it back...Look, the gambling money has to go somewhere. I know not everybody wins... I don’t have a gambling issue. I don’t have that addictive personality that I feel drawn to that. So I can walk past it and feel quite comfortable knowing where that money goes. I mean, look, if they don’t do it there they’re going to be doing it somewhere. So if they can put that back into the community and just try and level out what’s happening negatively, with what is going on with gambling, maybe that’s a good thing.” Mother, 35 years old, attends venue once a month.

While all parents in this study had taken their children to gambling venues, few parents had had conversations with their children about the risks associated with gambling products. Some parents described indirect forms of education about gambling products. For example, one mother stated that she had “*drummed*” into her children “*you’ve got to work hard for that money in the first place*”. Other parents said that if children asked about products they had a brief conversation, with one mother telling her sons “*they’re the devil. They lose all your money*”. Others thought it better not to discuss it with their children:

“Sometimes you’re better off not putting into their head, I think, until they’re really old enough to know what’s going on.” Father, 43 years old, attends venue once a week by himself and once a month with family.

Interestingly, during the interviews several parents realised that they had not discussed gambling products or gambling harm with their children, and indicated that they thought it was important to now have these discussions.

Discussion

This research aimed to explore the social practices of families that attend community gambling venues, the range of factors that shape these practices and how families conceptualise the risks and benefits of venues, and the range of activities within them. This research raises three points for discussion.

First, the study found that a range of factors influence attendance at community gambling venues. It supports other studies (Bestman, Thomas, Randle, Pitt, & Daube, 2018), which show that community members perceive venues as accessible and available. However, this research also shows the extent to which parents see community venues containing EGMs as affordable, family friendly environments. The study also showed that the lack of alternatives also played a role in decisions to attend venues. The narratives in the study provided more detail about how promotions, including special events and refurbishments, encourage family attendance at venues, including through the associations that are built within sporting clubs at the junior level. They also showed how uptake of special offers, and the use of venues to host special occasions including birthday parties and other rituals, play an important role in the continued and intergenerational patterns of attendance reflected in this sample.

While research has previously documented the range of marketing strategies that appeal to families within venues (Bestman et al., 2016), the current research has shown that the provision of children's activities and the facilitation of family social events also play a key role in encouraging family attendance at venues. Further, parents indicated that the presence of other families also contributed to the appeal and normalisation of gambling venues for families. Parents' recall and use of 'deals' particularly those relating to creating affordable food options and references to the welcoming environment also highlight the inclusive nature of community gambling venues. It is the interplay of these factors that reinforces the perception that community based gambling venues can be appropriate settings for children. These factors play a role in creating environments that individuals from lower socio-economic groups with less resources may not otherwise have access to. This study showed

that venues are embedded in communities and their use is habitual. For example, in New South Wales community gambling venues have had long ties to communities since they first legally operated in 1956 (Australian Institute for Gambling Research, 1999). The interplay of these factors could have implications for children who are exposed to gambling environments, particularly given research that suggests that children who attend community gambling venues are exposed to EGMs and indicate future intentions to use gambling products (Bestman et al., 2017). The impact of exposure and the intention to use gambling products among children is not yet known. Future research should aim to explore such impacts, including following children who attend community venues through adulthood to examine their gambling behaviours.

The second point relates to the extent to which parents perceived community gambling venues as risky environments. Some parents in this study indicated they did not perceive that children were at risk within gambling environments. The findings of this study suggest that this perception is enhanced by the non-gambling, family activities provided and the extent to which these activities are utilised by other families. Consistent with Bourdieu's (1986) concept, this study also found that social and cultural structures prevent some parents from acting on their knowledge due to a lack of resources. While parents viewed gambling products as potentially harmful for those who used them, the 'doxa' (the rules of the 'game') (Bourdieu, 1990) within these environments mean that decisions to attend venues as a family are made within societal constraints and social norms, such as attending as part of a social sporting team. This trade-off also occurs at a broader level that influences the building of social capital for example through the subsidising of junior sport. This supports other research that suggests that community gambling venues provide a range of family activities and subsidise sporting activities to encourage future attendance, particularly in areas that lack affordable alternatives (Fabiansson, 2016).

Finally, this research raises important areas for future research and policy interventions. A key factor that facilitated social engagement of families in venues that contain gambling products was the lack of alternative settings where families can build social capital. It is important that future research examines the barriers to accessing environments that do not contain gambling products, particularly EGMs. This includes examining physical accessibility, financial accessibility and social accessibility of venues. Government, including at the local level, should seek to examine how policy can facilitate non-gambling

environments for families. Further, the research indicates that the relationship between venues and sporting groups requires further investigation. While there is no doubt that some gambling venues provide valued resources to junior sporting groups, the effect of this sponsorship on perceptions of gambling venues should be investigated. While sponsorship by venues differs from that by tobacco companies (as venues are not normally directly promoting gambling products) this promotion may act to normalise gambling products co-located within environments perceived as positive family settings. Further research should aim to investigate alternative sources of funding for community venues and young people’s activities.

Limitations of this study should be noted. The study included a small sample of individuals from one geographic area in NSW, and did not examine the experiences of individuals who did not attend community gambling venues. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalisable to the broader population.

Conclusion

This research has shown that the interplay of individual, social and structural factors influence parents’ decisions to attend community gambling venues with their children. For some, activities that take place in venues including birthday parties and other celebrations form part of family life which is transmitted through generations. Despite recognising the harm associated with EGMs, many parents distinguished venue attendance from exposure to EGMs and said that they had not discussed gambling harm with their children. The narratives reported in this paper, provide an insight into the mundane ways in which gambling has become embedded in everyday life, not necessarily through advertising, but through social practices that are naturalised and therefore rarely submitted to critical attention. Future research should examine the long term impacts of children’s attendance at community gambling venues. However, research in this study indicates that social practices within venues may influence perceptions of risk associated with community gambling venues containing activities for children. Local organisers should look for and cultivate alternative sources of funding for activities involving young people, and communities may wish to promote or create alternative social spaces for families that do not contain gambling products.

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